

THE GRACE OF GOD

by Abri Brancken

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:8-10

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do".

WHAT IS GRACE?

Many people have different ideas of what "grace" is.

Grace is an essential part of God's character.

Grace is closely related to God's kindness, love, and mercy.

The word "grace" can, like forgiveness, repentance, etc., mean something as broad as describing the whole of God's activity toward man or as narrow as describing one segment of that activity.

In the New Testament, "grace" (156 times) takes on a special redemptive sense in which God makes available his favor on behalf of sinners, who actually do not deserve it. There is tremendous emphasis in the New Testament upon the fact that human salvation is the result of Heaven's grace. Generally, grace is described as the unmerited or undeserving favour of God toward man. The concept of grace is most prominently found in the New Testament in the epistles of Paul.

GRACE (ILLUSTRATION) – IT IS A GIFT

(Translators please note: I will be explaining practically what grace is through an illustration)

First, anyone who has ever received a gift understands that a gift is much different from a loan, which requires repayment or return by the recipient. The fact that grace is a gift means that nothing is owed in return.

Second, there is no cost to the person who receives a gift. A gift is free to the recipient, although it is not free to the giver, who bears the expense.

The gift of salvation costs us sinners nothing. But the price of such an extravagant gift came at a great cost for our Lord Jesus, who died in our place.

Third, once a gift has been given, ownership of the gift has transferred and it is now ours to keep. There is a permanence in a gift that does not exist with loans or advances. When a gift changes hands, the giver permanently relinquishes all rights to renege or take back the gift in future. God's grace is ours forever, but it is important how we deal with this gift. We cannot neglect it, not should we abuse it.

GRACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament grace points towards God's love in action towards men who deserves the opposite of love. Grace means God moving heaven and earth to save sinners who could not lift a finger to save themselves. Grace can be variously defined as "God's favor toward the unworthy" . "Grace" derives from the Greek, charis. Charis came to signify "favor," "goodwill," and "lovingkindness" — especially as granted by a superior to an inferior.

Grace is also God's empowering ability that enables us to do His will. Grace = power and enablement! Paul says that he is what he is by the grace of God. He even compares himself to others who had worked among the community, the other apostles, and declares that he worked harder than all of them. In order that this statement might not seem boastful, Paul follows it up by saying "yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." God's grace, His empowering ability, helped Paul to work harder than the other apostles. God's grace renewed Paul's inward spirit and assured him of glory in the afterlife (vv. 16-17). Hence, Paul's ministry is not one that he always does joyfully or motivated by his own power, but rather motivated by faith that God is working in the present and will reward him in the eschaton.

GRACE AND THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Grace is associated strongly with the gifts of the Spirit. This is true of the list of gifts in Ephesians 4:3-11 corporately to the church and the gifts given to individuals within the church for its edification (Rom 12:4-8 ; 1 Cor 12). Romans 12:3-8. Here Paul states we have different gifts "according to the grace given us"

The one reference in James links it to God's gift (4:6). Peter, who also includes it in his greeting, quotes the same Old Testament verse as James (1 Peter 5:5) and speaks of us as stewards of the grace of God (4:10). Peter also closes his second epistle with a benediction in joining us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The Book of Revelation also begins with a salutation and closes with a benediction that includes grace (1:4 ; 22:21).

GRACE IS NOT A LISENCE TO SIN

"Grace" and "obedience" are not enemies. Paul affirmed that grace is accessed by faith (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8-9). We should use God's goodness and His empowering ability to glorify Him, not engage in sin.

GOD'S GRACE IS ONGOING

Grace does not stop once we are saved; God is gracious to us for the rest of our lives, working within and upon us. The Bible encourages us with many additional benefits that grace secures for every believer:

- Grace justifies us before a holy God (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:6; Titus 3:7).
- Grace provides us access to God to communicate and fellowship with Him (Ephesians 1:6; Hebrews 4:16).
- Grace wins for us a new relationship of intimacy with God (Exodus 33:17).
- Grace disciplines and trains us to live in a way that honors God (Titus 2:11–14; 2 Corinthians 8:7).
- Grace grants us immeasurable spiritual riches (Proverbs 10:22; Ephesians 2:7).
- Grace helps us in our every need (Hebrews 4:16).
- Grace is the reason behind our every deliverance (Psalm 44:3–8; Hebrews 4:16).
- Grace preserves us and comforts, encourages, and strengthens us (2 Corinthians 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17; 2 Timothy 2:1).

CONCLUSION

God's grace is always enough to help us through any and every situation. Remember, grace is God's ability that He gives to us to live the lives He has called us to live.